

EMBRACING THE CHANGES

Deepen Faith - Nurture Hope - Celebrate Life

Beginning Sunday, November 27, 2011, the First Sunday of Advent, there will be changes in the Eucharistic Liturgy, the Mass. Preparing for these changes will provide us with an opportunity to examine and renew our celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy that stands at the heart of Catholic Christian Life, and to deepen our understanding and appreciation of the Liturgy, nurture liturgical practices that will lead to fuller liturgical participation, and celebrate the Liturgy with renewed purpose.

SCRIPTURE AND THE MASS

Every Mass includes a Liturgy of the Word, the main elements being biblical readings, the singing of a psalm, reaching its high point in the proclamation of the Gospel. The use of Scripture in the Mass does not end when the Liturgy of the Word has finished, but continues throughout the prayers of the Mass.

A Biblical Greeting

At several points in the Mass, the priest or deacon and the people engage in the following dialogue: Priest or Deacon: The Lord be with you. All: And with your spirit. (*The Order of Mass*, 2). The first words come from a greeting of Boaz, the great-grandfather of King David: “Boaz . . . said to the harvesters, ‘The Lord be with you!’ and they replied, ‘The Lord bless you!’” (Ru 2:4). The people’s response reflects the language of St. Paul. In Galatians, he says, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen” (Gal 6:18).

Welcoming the Lord

Before coming forward to receive the Lord in Holy Communion, we welcome the Lord: Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed. (*The Order of Mass*, 132) This prayer quotes the centurion who asked Jesus to cure his servant. He would not presume to ask Jesus to come to his home, but trusted in the authority of Jesus’ healing word, saying: “Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed” (Mt 8:8; see Lk 7:6-7). This new phrasing reminds us that, in receiving Holy Communion, we are to emulate the centurion’s humility and faith.

Deeper Understanding

If we recognize the biblical references that underlie the liturgical texts, we will have a fuller understanding of their meaning. Eucharistic Prayer I includes the following passage: Be pleased to look upon these offerings with a serene and kindly countenance, and to accept them, as you were pleased to accept the gifts of your servant Abel the just, the sacrifice of Abraham, our father in faith, and the offering of your high priest Melchizedek, a holy sacrifice, a spotless victim. (*The Order of Mass*, 93) If we know who Abel (Gn 4:4) and Melchizedek (Gn 14:18-20) are and if we understand the importance of Abraham’s sacrifice (Gn 15:7-21; 22:1-14), we will more fully appreciate the concept of sacrifice and how our celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice ties us to our ancestors in the faith, from the very beginning.

The Word of God in Scripture and the Eucharist

Before the Communion Rite, the priest breaks the Host and shows it to the people, saying: Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb. (*The Order of Mass*, 132) The first part echoes the words of John the Baptist, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29). In the same way, we who are united in the Body of Christ in the Sacrament of Baptism and strengthened in the Eucharist are called to point others to Jesus through our words and actions. The second part reflects the words of the Book of Revelation: “Then the angel said to me, ‘Write this: Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb’” (Rev 19:9). In this prayer, we rejoice for those who have been found worthy to share in the heavenly Liturgy, the supper of the Lamb, and we pray that one day, we may join them in the everlasting life of the Kingdom of God.

Based upon Roman Missal Formational Materials provided by the Secretariat for the Liturgy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2010.

Best suggested resource: www.usccb.org/romanmissal/